
Three Count.

Volume 1, Number 14

December 13, 1991

Vote on pro wrestling regulation bill in Florida delayed until January

A vote on a bill to regulate professional wrestling within the state of Florida was delayed Tuesday until January by the Committee on Regulated Industry in Tallahassee.

The 64-page bill calls for pro wrestling to fall under the mandate of the state's athletic commission, which also governs professional boxing and kick boxing. Many of the same rules which govern those two sports have been applied to wrestling, which have three independent wrestling promoters within the state of Florida criticizing the measures.

"If passed, the bill is going to make it extremely difficult to put on shows," said Henry Raines, owner of the Bradenton-based Suncoast Pro Wrestling promotion. "I can see certain situations that would enable us to put on shows, but I can't see myself taking a risk with running house shows with the costs involved in the new package. Plus, there are so many trivial things they want to regulate that don't make any sense when it comes to pro wrestling."

The bill, which will be voted on in mid-January, came about after a report presented to the Committee by legislative analyst Janet Clark in November. The report detailed cases of false advertisement and alleged abuse of anabolic steroids, with *Wrestling Observer Newsletter* editor Dave Meltzer and Marylou Gantner, mother of former pro wrestler Ed "The Bull" Gantner, supporting Clark's findings.

The January hearing is expected to bring Linda McMahon, wife of World Wrestling Federation owner Vince McMahon, to testify against wrestling regulation, according to a source close to the situation. Some of Florida's independent promotions will also have representatives in opposition to regulation. World Championship Wrestling has no plans to send a lobbyist or representative to the hearing.

Excluding a five-percent tax on gross receipts from live, pay-per-view and closed-circuit wrestling events emanating or purchased in Florida, the bill calls for measures not traditionally associated with the world of wrestling. Section 15 of the bill calls for non-refundable license fees for announcers (not to exceed \$100),

booking agent (not to exceed \$250), manager (n.t.e. \$100), referee (n.t.e. \$100), wrestler (n.t.e. \$100) and timekeeper (n.t.e. \$100). An increase in the required security bond from applicants for a promoters' license from \$3,000 to \$5,000 has also been called for.

Another controversial aspect of the bill is Section 28, which requires a promoter to pay for an ambulance and two emergency medical technicians to be on hand for the duration of a show. Raines said the cost of retaining an ambulance in the Tampa area is \$60 an hour. Section 27 also calls for the promoter to provide a ring-side physician for each match, and each participant in a match to have a physical examination within 12 hours preceding the match to determine their well being.

"The bill, as a whole, has quite a few problems, particularly with the fee structure for promoters and individual wrestlers," said Chris Qualmann, legal counsel for the Orlando-based International Wrestling Federation. "This bill creates more problems for the smaller independent promotions, a point which often gets lost. These promotions normally draw, and the IWF is no exception, about 100-300 people a show. The evening's gross is usually between \$800-\$2,500. The bill would require an ambulance at each match, a ringside physician and various other things that run into the hundreds of dollars. That is devastating to the small federations. The bigger promotions are able to absorb that sort of thing with a lot less difficulty."

Section 29 has been revised to require each wrestler provide a minimum of \$2,500 of insurance coverage for medical, surgical and hospital care which is required as a result of injuries incurred in a match. Traditionally, it has been difficult to find insurance agencies willing to provide coverages for pro wrestlers.

Raines said he spoke with an insurance company in Maryland that provides wrestlers with coverage, and the results were unfavorable from a promoter's standpoint.

"The whole requirement for accident insurance for wrestlers sound like a good idea, but the coverage they are asking for doesn't make any sense in the context of what we are doing," Raines said. "The company in

Maryland told me, as a rule of thumb, I should figure on paying \$25 a wrestler or each match in insurance. On a little independent card, the guys are only getting paid \$25 each. What makes the coverage so silly in my view is the promoter has to cover the deductible. In Maryland, the deductible starts at \$500, and the limit is \$2,500. That means you have a \$2,000 window of coverage if someone gets hurt. If something happens that requires one wrestler to make one trip to the emergency room, it's going to cost less than \$500. The same thing if someone gets taken to the hospital, but does not have a broken bone. I'm better off setting aside \$500 for the wrestlers each card for the time one of them gets hurt."

Raines said no one has ever sustained a major injury on a Suncoast show, but he does not feel obligated to pay a wrestler's medical bills should such a debilitating injury occur.

"I've had people who have banged their head or hurt their back during a Suncoast match tell me they went to see their chiropractor or doctor," said Raines, who opened Suncoast in 1988. "To be honest, I didn't offer to pay for their doctor bill, because I think everybody understands the situation and economics of the system. I'm losing money for them to hone the craft and perform in front of an audience when I promote a show. I performed on Paul Spiegel's show in Tampa the other night. I knew if I got injured, I wouldn't expect him to cover my costs."

Other sections of the bill besides the financial sections have created controversy. Section 17 prohibits the licensing of a wrestler past the age of 45, unless they are pronounced physically fit by a physician. Section 24 allows "the commission to set criteria and standards in all matters pertaining to participants' wearing apparel and appearance." Section 25 goes one step further, prohibiting a performer from touching or threatening a referee, and barring all action outside the ring or on the ring apron. Both those measures are rules that apply more to boxing than wrestling. Raines took exception to Section 22, which requires a wrestler to register a fictitious or assumed name prior to match time with the commission.

"In our case at Suncoast, we often have a situation where a wrestler doesn't show up, and the odd man left is a babyface," Raines said. "I need him to wrestle as a heel. Normally, I would just stick him under a mask and call him Punisher or Destroyer and let him wrestle against another babyface. In this case, I wouldn't be allowed to do that unless the name was pre-registered."

Section 34 has the most outlandish clause of all in a wrestling sense: "The commission's representative may order a promoter to withhold money payable to a participant if ... there appears to be collusion to fix, alter or influence the outcome of the match."

"I don't know how a state can regulate some-

thing as an athletic event when it's not," said Howard Brody, owner of the Fort Lauderdale-based Ladies Major League Wrestling group. "Wrestling is entertainment. To put the same guidelines of boxing toward pro wrestling is absolutely ludicrous.

"The whole bill started out as something to rid steroids from the state of Florida. Instead, it has turned into an all encompassing bill to try and get pro wrestling back under the control of the boxing commission, something that was done away with 30 years ago. If there is to be a regulatory agency, I think it should be separate from boxing and comprised by those within the wrestling business. Maybe pick one representative of each wrestling promotion as coordinating factions. Taking out the word 'boxing' and writing 'wrestling' into the guidelines is not the way it should be."

Separate from the financial matters are other aspects of the bill that some wrestling promoter's may take exception to. Section 38 prohibits a wrestler from engaging in more than one match within a 24-hour period, which would make television tapings for all wrestling groups virtually impossible to execute in Florida. As would Section 46, Subsection 14, which would allow the Commission to suspend the license of any promoter who "has consistently failed to make matches between participants of similar ability and skill." Section 17 provides licensing requirements prohibiting anyone under 18 years of age, and requiring any performer 45-years of age or older to undergo a physical exam before being granted permission to wrestle in Florida.

The original points that had some wrestling insiders supporting the bill — penalties against false advertising and mandatory random testing for anabolic steroids and street drugs — are included, but not to a large extent. Section 43 calls for refunds to be granted upon the postponement of a main event or the substitution of either main event participant, with penalty of suspension of the promoter's license. Section 19, Subsection 3 reads, "No promoter shall advertise or continue to advertise that one or more participants will perform when such is not the case. The license of any promoter who continues this practice after a warning by the commission shall be suspended or revoked."

Drug testing is called for in Section 10, but anabolic steroids are not specifically mentioned nor have penalties been established, leaving that up to the Commission should the bill pass.

"There are issues worthy of being addressed in this bill," Qualmann said. "False advertising is one of them. I hope the bill forces certain federations to clean up their act. If there was a specific section dealing specifically with wrestling, not something lumped into the same section as boxing, it would be a lot more manageable. The two cannot be considered in the same vein."

Results

Three Count readers John Patton and Alfonso Barreiro attended a World Championship Wrestling card Dec. 7 in Jacksonville with my girlfriend, Carol, and I. The following is our report:

1. **Big Josh and Mike Graham** defeated **Ricky Morton and Terrance Taylor** when Josh pinned Taylor. When Taylor attempted to tag out, Morton gave him a forearm smash, leading to the pinfall. Fans still booed Taylor after the match. Grade: B.

2. **Arachniman (Brad Armstrong)** defeated **Oz** by turning an abdominal stretch into a guillotine for the pin after a gruesome 8 minutes. Oz held Arachniman in a face lock for more than half the match. Arachniman also missed an attempt to leap over the top rope at the end of the match. Grade: D-.

3. **Big Van Vader** defeated **John Peterson** in a two-minute squash. Unlike the previous night in Perry, Vader had the gimmick with him. Vader was over pretty good. Grade: C.

4. **Steve Austin** (accompanied by **Paul E. Dangerously**) defeated **Brian Pillman** in the best match on the show. There were some great spots in this match, including Pillman catching Austin with a dropkick in the face while Austin jumped from the top rope, and Pillman executing a Mexican flying head scissors. Finish was a little screwed up, with Austin not hitting Pillman with Dangerously's phone squarely. Grade: B+.

5. **Scott Steiner** defeated **Mr. Hughes** in about 9 minutes with a frankensteiner. Scott looks huge, and was announced at weighing 280 pounds. Hughes wrestled while wearing his sunglasses, which could someday result in a problem should they ever break in a match. Grade: B.

At intermission, they announced **Wrestle War '92** would be held in Jacksonville May 17. They also announced **Barry Windham** as appearing on the next WCW show in Jacksonville Jan. 16. Windham did an interview and some run-ins on last Monday's WCW television taping, and will wrestle with a cast on his mending right wrist in matches. No announcement was ever made that **Madusa** would not be wrestling **Bambi** (the match was scrapped; Bambi told the office she had a prior commitment, and Madusa had been real stiff in the ring with her earlier in the week).

6. **Cactus Jack** defeated **Van Hammer** after delivering a headbutt to Hammer's groin on the latter's leapfrog attempt. Jack worked with the flu, but still carried this to a very good match, taking a suplex on the concrete and administering an elbow drop from the ring apron to the cement. Grade: B.

7. **Ricky Steamboat** and **Dustin Rhodes** defeated **The Enforcers (Arn Anderson and Larry Zbyszko)** when Steamboat pinned Zbyszko after a

cross body-block off the top rope. This was Steamboat's first house show appearance since returning to WCW, but this match was not as good as the original match at the Clash of Champions. Dustin worked most of the way, getting worked over, but Steamboat's spots were fantastic. After the match, Austin rushed the ring and attacked Steamboat along with The Enforcers until Dustin made the save. How much sense does that post-match melee make? Grade: B.

8. **Rick Rude** defeated **Sting** via disqualification when the referee caught Sting using the phone. This match was very good in spots, but was overbooked with all sorts of crazy action. Rude spent the match working on Sting's back, which made no sense considering Sting has an "injured" left knee. Apparently, WCW's front office doesn't want Sting to sell the knee injury any more. Sting made a comeback and put Rude into the scorpion deathlock. Madusa ran in and kicked Sting, causing him to break the hold. While Sting chased Madusa and Paul E. argued with the official, the phone was thrown into the ring. Sting and Rude looked at the phone, then each other and dashed after it. Sting got hold of it and bonked Rude for the DQ. Rude and Paul worked over Sting's knee with a chair after the match. The finish of this but had to be changed, because the match between the two from Thanksgiving night at the Omni was shown earlier in the evening on TBS. Grade: B-.

9. **Lex Luger** pinned **Rick Steiner** after Steiner and **Harley Race** hit heads at the finish. I was told Race had been fired earlier in the week, but he was at this show. The referee was bumped at the end, and Scott came out to count a Steiner pinfall. Hughes and Steiner began brawling, leading to the finish. Grade: B-.

Notes: Attendance was 3,100 paid (3,600 fans in the building) for a gate of about \$28,600, the highest total on WCW's Florida tour. **Jim Barnett**, **Terry Allen**, **Windham** and **Dusty Rhodes** were backstage for a steering committee meeting, because most WCW performers were scheduled to travel the next day to England for a WCW tour. **Van Hammer** stayed for 20 minutes after the matches signing autographs, which I thought was nice.

Paul Spiegel promoted a **Suncoast/Championship Wrestling** from Florida show Dec. 7 at American Legion Post 139 in Tampa. The following is his report:

1. **Jim "The Animal" Cooper** defeated **The River Rat**; 2. **"Hammerin'" Henry Raines** lost to **Big Sonny T.** when T. used the ropes for leverage at the pinfall (Editor's note: Does this mean Sonny T. won't be working any more Suncoast shows?); 3. **Vern Henderson** defeated **Mike Steele**; 4. **Rob Van Dam** (who was over big) defeated **Jumbo Barreta** via disqualification; 5. **The Black Panther** won by forfeit over **Jerry "Superfoot" Flynn** (Flynn was scheduled to leave to Japan for Pro Wrestling Fujiwara the next day); 6. **Tommy Starr** and **Kevin Sullivan** fought to a wild double disqualification.

Letters

Dear Alex,

While I admire the conviction with which you pursue the "steroids in wrestling" issue, I feel I must provide some information which may be relevant. Before I do, I must say I am not sure I agree with the idea wrestlers should be tested for steroids or other drugs. They are in the entertainment business, and I compare it to testing actors or musicians who perform on stage. Certainly, musicians have as much influence, if not more, on the youth of our country, and the drugs some of them take are just as harmful. But that is not the central focus of my point. While the state of Florida may hold hearings on the proposed regulation of wrestling, I fear there will be little result. Taxes may be levied (anything to increase revenue in these troubled times) and rules may be written, but true enforcement, in my opinion, is unlikely.

I worked for the Department of Business Regulation for more than eight years with their Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering. There are extensive rules governing the use of illegal drugs in both horse and greyhound racing, as well as recently enacted testing for human licensees at tracks and frontons. I left my job as an investigator, because the Department covered up a massive drug scandal at the horse tracks in the late 1980s. For nearly three years, I tried to get someone in the state government to do something about it, without success. Even the newspapers were unable to report the full story. The same House Committee on Regulated Industries failed to address any of the problems. The state agency that was to regulate drug use in racing was corrupt and incompetent, showing little concern for the safety of the animals or humans. With the election of a new governor, there have been several changes at high levels. However, the persons responsible for the old problems are still there, and may be involved in the future testing of the wrestlers.

Another problem involves the fact the industry was involved in the writing of the rules, as well as the fact there are big contributions to the campaign funds of people on that committee. And we know how money talks. We don't even want to talk about the boxing commission. Because of my history with the department and the Committee, I do not see anything positive coming from the hearings. I wish you success in your efforts, but I thought you might like to know a little about the people you are dealing with.

Next, I thought the Survivor Series was good, with the Roddy Piper-Ric Flair teams' match-up and the Hulk Hogan-Undertaker matches the best of the lot. What belt was Flair holding up when he entered the ring? What happened to no-show Big Bully Busick? And why did Sid Justice not make an appearance? I thought the re-instatement of Randy Savage was done well, but was disappointed Jake Roberts was pulled from his match. In

any case, I felt the "Tuesday in Texas" pay-per-view show was both over and under pushed. They must have said "Tuesday in Texas" a hundred times, but there was no mention of the undercard.

Finally, several questions:

1) What has happened to the UWF? I haven't seen their show lately on SportsChannel. There were rumors Paul Orndorff tried to return to the WWF. Is that true?

2) Is there a standard length of a WCW contract? Over the years, I have seen wrestlers come and go, some leaving before the hype for their feuds has played through on television. I realize injuries occur and talent is raided, usually by the WWF, but many appear to have just gone elsewhere, like the SST, Owen Hart, Renegade Warriors, Kevin Sullivan, Desperados, etc. They have, though, improved their talent roster with the addition of Rick Rude and Ricky Steamboat, and the return of Scott Steiner and Big Van Vader.

3) Why have most WCW pay-per-view cards, which usually contain an excellent main event, have such uneventful undercards? Why are there ongoing feuds with the non-main event players rarely placed on PPVs and replaced by some really strange match-ups? In contrast, most of the WWF's undercard usually gets some promotion or relates to the current scripts on TV, even if some are ridiculous.

4) I recently watched the Hulkamania VI video tape, and thought the match between Hogan and Stan Hansen from Tokyo was fantastic. After seeing this, I would love to see Hogan take on Van Vader. Why doesn't the WWF promote a PPV or devote a video tape to their matches from Japan? Do you know if they have any plans to show the match-up between Hogan and the Japanese champion (Genichiro Tenryu) against the Legion of Doom?

5) Finally, whatever happened to Mr. Magnificent, Larry Cameron, One Man Gang, Nikita Koloff and Dan Spivey?

-- Steven Smith, North Miami Beach.

AM: Before answering Steve's questions, I wanted to offer my thoughts on the Committee and state boxing commission. I don't have much faith in the Committee, and after having little to begin with, have even less respect for the boxing agency. The new bill presented seems more like a modus operandi for funding the boxing commission, not regulating wrestling. However, the issue goes beyond the Committee or this bill. If people in power outside the wrestling business are informed about some of the realities of today's wrestling business (steroids, false advertising, lack of health insurance, etc.), maybe pressure will force the wrestling companies to change their method of business. It has become obvious over the past six months neither group

is attempting to change any of the matters discussed.

Also, concerning Survivor Series, Busick quit because of a combination of dissatisfaction with his role and desire to stop travelling. Flair's belt was censored because the WWF is attempting to make an angle out of the NWA's lawsuit trying to bar the belt from appearing on WWF telecasts. No idea why Justice wasn't mentioned, but I figure he will be the mystery performer in the Royal Rumble that Piper keeps talking about.

Now, to the questions:

1. The UWF still has an exclusive contract with SportsChannel America, but has not produced new programming in a while. I know they are around, because UWF owner Herb Abrams paid Spivey and Steve Williams to not appear on Gordon Scozzari's December television tapings of the American Wrestling Federation's debut shows. Orndorff was rumored to be heading back to the WWF when Justice debuted last summer, but nothing ever came about.

2. WCW's continuity problem is a combination of WWF raids, wrestlers' abrupt departures and self-inflicted woes. Let me give you an example using the names you have listed. The SST left because of conflicts with WCW's front office. Hart wrestled a few WCW matches in April, but was then scheduled for tours of Mexico, Europe and Japan the rest of 1991, so WCW let him go. Why they gave him air time knowing he wasn't going to stay is a mystery to me. The Renegade Warriors were fired when WCW switched match-makers from Ole Anderson to Dusty Rhodes. Sullivan had merely run the gambit, staying with WCW for almost four years, before being let go for cost-cutting reasons. Two of The Desperados (Dutch Mantell and Moondog Spot) refused to sign WCW's new contract for part-time wrestlers, which is an exclusive deal for \$300 a night for a minimum of 60 dates a year. Some wrestlers (Nasty Boys, Justice) were raided by the WWF despite WCW's offer of better contracts. Other WWF stars (Flair, The Legion of Doom) were released from agreements by WCW for personal/financial reasons.

3. The reason or the lousy undercards is a lack of direction on WCW's match-making (steering) committee. Most WWF feuds conclude at a pay-per-view, and the wrestlers are reprogrammed in upcoming weeks with different wrestlers to feud with. WCW, lacking continuity, doesn't have a blow-off match for their feuds. Also, WCW believes the main event is what sells a pay-per-view show, not the undercard (and history has proven that is the case).

4. Hogan cannot wrestle Vader, because they work for different promotions (the Hogan-Hansen match was held in 1990, before the WWF reached an exclusive agreement with Super World Sports). I figure the WWF will show a mega-card from Japan on pay-per-view in 1992, if only because WCW is doing the same with its Jan.

4 show from the Tokyo Dome. By the way, you may want to place an ad in our "advertisements" section to try and obtain some old matches with Hogan from Japan (and there are a bunch) and/or the Dec. 10 WWF-SWS show from Tokyo.

5. I assume Mr. Magnificent is Kevin Kelly, who, after failing in an attempt to land a spot with the WWF or WCW, is out of the wrestling business. Cameron still pops up on independent shows in Minnesota, and usually tours Japan once a year. The One Man Gang has reportedly lost a lot of weight and is working independent shows (he performed at an 11/24 card in Daytona Beach). Koloff turned down a one-year \$250,000 contract from WCW and now works mostly independent shows in the mid-Atlantic area. Spivey is a main-event caliber star for All Japan Pro Wrestling, where he currently wrestles more than 24 weeks out of the year.

Dear Alex,

I would like to respond to Bobbie Miller's letter in Issue 11, and your request to recall your scariest moments in wrestling. Personally, I consider myself a hard-core wrestling fan, so the cobra bite on Randy Savage wasn't that bad, but I can see how it could scare little kids. My four-year-old cousin was scared to death by it. The WWF has gone too far in recent months with their angles, especially since they claim to be "family entertainment." Even The Undertaker, with his coffin, urn and tattoo, is a little too much for kids. I hope the WWF is a bit more cautious in the future.

As for my scariest memories, I seem to have three. I grew up in Longwood watching Championship Wrestling from Florida and loved the great wrestling, great brawls and the blood. My mother got me started watching wrestling, but always wanted me to turn it off when there was blood. I never did. Anyway, I can remember when Kendo Nagasaki attacked Eddie Graham, kicking his back while Graham was draped over the rope and making him "hemorrhage." My mother hated that, but I always loved wrestlers who would "shake and quake" after being piledriven or beaten up. But that memory doesn't crack my list.

The scariest moment was when Mr. Florida (Paul Jones — I knew it was him, because he was the only wrestler I ever knew who executed the "Indian deathlock") had his eye burnt by Sir Oliver Humperdink's cigar on TV. I started crying, because I really thought he had burnt him good. For a few months afterward, he had to wear an eye patch underneath his mask, and all of Humperdink's wrestlers would gouge at it.

Second was when Kevin Sullivan (and his satanic friends) stabbed Dusty Rhodes with the "golden spike" a thousand times on TV. Dusty was bleeding so badly my mother forced me to turn the show off. But I guess Dusty survived, because he was on TV the next

week.

Third was a match on Georgia Championship Wrestling with Austin Idol vs. "Maniac" Mark Lewin. Lewin caught Idol in his "Shanghai sleeper" and held it for so long Idol was frothing at the mouth. It was both scary and funny (he was drooling foam) at the same time.

Others also pop into my mind. Once at the Lakeland County Civic Center, Buggy McGraw had a taped-fist, loser-gets-his-head-shaved match against Bubba Douglas, the "Unofficial Mayor of Lakeland." Douglas got beat up so badly he couldn't sit up in the chair to get his head shaved. It was awful. Another one was also funny, too. It was my 10th birthday (1979) and my parent finally took me and my best friend to see wrestling live at the Eddie Graham Sports Stadium in Orlando. We had front row seats, so we were really excited. But on the drive to the arena, my father told me to look at the scary men in the car next to us. Inside were Dick Slater, Mr. Saito and Ivan Koloff. Koloff opened his big eyes wide at my friend and I, and we sank down in the car seat. My friend was about to cry, and I was scared to death, because I thought what if they remembered us and came after us in the crowd? My friend and I were petrified, but my parents laughed all the way to the building.

A couple of questions for you: 1) Is there any way to get a copy of Janet Clark's recommendation to the Florida Committee on Regulated Industry?; 2) Do you know when tickets go on sale for Wrestle War '92 in Jacksonville?

— Marc Blattner, Atlanta

AM: I remember calling Channel 6 in Miami after the Mr. Florida cigar skit and asking if they knew whether they knew if he was OK. They didn't know what to say.

To answer your questions, send a letter to Clark with the request c/o Committee on Regulated Industries, 402 House Office Building, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300. Wrestle War '92 tickets are expected to go on sale in mid-January. I'll have an exact date next issue.

Desire any wrestling memorabilia? Interested in video tape of old matches or those from other parts of the country or world? Advertise here for free for subscribers only at P.O. Box 12795, Gainesville, Fla. 32604-0795. I'm also looking for results and/or analysis of matches from other arts of the country. Please send them to the above address.

Three Count is a professional wrestling newsletter published four times a month. Price for subscription is \$6 for one month, \$18 for three months, \$33 for six months and \$66 for one year. Please address all subscription checks to Three Count at P.O. Box 12795, Gainesville, Fla., 32604-0795.

World Championship Wrestling

It appears WCW has gotten the short end of the stick in regards to its tie-in with the Starlight Foundation for the Dec. 29 Starrcade pay-per-view show. Turner Home Entertainment, which syndicates and produces WCW pay-per-view shows, has raised the price of the show from \$19.95 to \$19.99, with the extra four cents going to Starlight. Cable distributors have agreed to match THE's four-cent pledge, so Starlight will receive \$.08 an order. If an estimated 150,000 homes purchase the show, Starlight will receive \$12,000.

Starlight, though, won't be delivering the stars to appear at Starrcade it had originally dangled. WCW, which was initially told it had the chance of having John Candy or Kirk Cameron appear on the show, will only have the fast-talking bald guy from the Federal Express commercials appear.

Tidbits: Congratulations to Diamond Dallas Page, who was married two weekends ago to a non-wrestling personality in Chicago. DDP was scheduled to appear at a show in Miami while on his honeymoon Dec. 2, with WCW knowing well ahead of time DDP wasn't go to be there ... SuperBrawl '92 has been moved from the Taj Mahal in New Jersey to either Milwaukee or, more likely, the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas. Apparently, WWF owner Vince McMahon used his friendship with Taj Mahal owner Donald Trump to get WCW booted from the building. WCW was reportedly paying \$40,000 to use the building, not including a fee off every ticket sold ... The 12/7 World Championship Wrestling show was fantastic, highlighted by a match between Jushin Liger and Chris Benoit. I really enjoyed Jim Ross' commentary on this one, even though his constant remark that Benoit used to be known as The Pegasus Kid made no sense. American fans barely know who Liger is, let alone The Pegasus Kid ... One other beef on WCW telecasts. On the 12/7 syndicated World Wide Wrestling show, Madusa executed one of the most remarkable moves of the year. Wearing high heels, Madusa climbed to the top rope and jumped on to Michael Hayes 15 feet from ringside. The problem was WCW announcer Tony Schiavone barely showed any emotion toward the maneuver, and did not mention it later in the show. Wrestling moves, no matter how special they are, get lost in the shuffle if an announcer does not make them seem important. The same goes for WCW's constant stream of mid-card matches shown on WCW telecasts, which are so diluted they mean nothing. Somewhere along the line, WCW forgot that two-to-three weeks of hype for one specific match can boost ratings, and also justify job matches with the participants in that "special" match.

Spotlight on: Bob Roop

During his 19-year career, Bob Roop has functioned in almost every capacity the wrestling business can offer. Wrestler. Match-maker. Announcer. Road agent (for World Championship Wrestling from 1989-90). Roop, 46, is currently retired, and living in Fort Lauderdale, where he has almost completed work on an autobiography of his days in the sport.

Roop, a Southern Illinois University graduate who wrestled on the U.S. Olympic team in 1968, spent much of his career promoting and wrestling in Florida. Roop's credentials earned him a chance to speak Nov. 7 in regards to regulation of pro wrestling in the state of Florida. Roop spoke in favor of regulation, and also advocated the establishment of a retirement fund for former grapplers. The following interview covers Roop's thoughts on regulation and his previous experiences with commissions.

AM: Janet Clark's report indicates the state of Florida had guidelines covering wrestling from 1957-1984, making it mandatory a physician be at ringside for matches and an examination be given to the wrestler three hours prior to bell time. Having wrestled in Florida during the 1960s, '70s and '80s, what do you remember about this?

BR: When I broke into the sport in 1969, I never saw a Commissioner. About the only thing that stands out are memories of a commission doctor at matches in Miami Beach in 1974. The only reason I remember the guy was because he was 90 years old, and we all thought it was a joke that this guy would still be practicing. In my book, I have some great stories about the guy. Once, he was trying to give a guy a shot, and was poking around in his bag. He dropped the needle, and it rolled under the couch. He just picked it up and wiped it off on his sleeve, and was going to still give the guy a shot. He really was a serious quack, or maybe he had just reached an age that had left him infirmed. I'm sure the commission had to have paid him, because that would be the only reason he would be there. (Former Florida Championship Wrestling booker and part-owner) Eddie Graham and those guys weren't going to spend a nickel if they didn't have to.

In Michigan, they had a commissioner, a doctor and all the local jack-offs. I remember you had to have a doctor at ringside to run shows. But the local commission guy was responsible for getting him to the arena. I remember one time, a guy approached me and told me he had forgotten to call the doctor, so I couldn't run a show. I told him I was going to sue him and the state of Michigan for millions of dollars if I had to cancel my show. Because when you have to cancel, it kills the town and you can never come back. They ended up having a paramedic come in, and the commissioner was writing down blood pressures. I remember the paramedic read Les Thorton's blood pressure as 160-150, and the commissioner passed him. Any doctor would have immediately hospitalized the guy.

We once had a tour where we would work in Saginaw and Grand Rapids the next day. Ivan Koloff had been piledriven in Saginaw, and got knocked out, carried out on a stretcher, the whole bit. The Grand

Rapids commission got the commission report from Saginaw, and they weren't going to let Koloff work because he was knocked unconscious the previous day. Ole Anderson, who was the match-maker at the time, was pretty cool about it. Ole told everybody to pack their bags because we were taking it home. We already had a \$30,000 advance, and with the commission getting 10 percent of that, they were going to lose \$3,000. Ole also said he would have his attorney get in touch with the commission, and they backed off. Ole was bluffing, but it worked. He brought up this point: "You're the very guys that don't let me do one interview without you guys saying wrestling is fake and phony, but then you come out and tell me my guy can't work because he got injured in a wrestling match."

Back in Florida, we had shows in Tallahassee every Friday for years. We never saw any commissioners. My gut feeling is there probably was a commissioner around that was just trying to get a payoff by measuring the ring and sticking his nose in until he was given \$50 to take off. I'm not being cynical, but in every sport, most appointed people try to look for some sort of benefit out of what they should be governing. Some just want to get into the matches for free and sit at ringside. Most are looking for payoffs. In California, they had a commission with a doctor that was supposed to check everybody before their matches. But when I think back, it didn't apply to every city. It probably depends on the town in every state where the commissioner lives near. I would point out if they would break certain rules, they would be in violation of the code. When you come down to watch a show, the object is not to try and be a hard-ass. If you get too stiff, you're going to keep people from coming into the state. That's because the gates in Florida have been marginal or both groups.

AM: Can a commission do any good?

BR: I think one should exist. The one in California was very good, especially for doctors. There were guys up there trying to get boxing licenses who had no business doing it. They were blind or brain-damaged or already punch drunk. The commission didn't allow them to fight. But, remember, there is the potential for abuse in this business. You know wrestlers well enough to know the boys abuse themselves in such a way the

commission can do nothing about it. But I want to say guys today have it better than anybody else ever had it in the business. You make more money, you get to fly around and have the chance to stay at a nice hotel. When the revenue begins dropping off, like it's starting to do right now, there's a possibility of more problems returning. Guys today claim that when they have to drive more than six hours a day and wrestle, that's too much. I can tell you horror stories about traveling between Oklahoma and Amarillo, where between Sunday morning until late Monday night, you would drive 1,700 miles. You were in the car that whole time. I know of a few instances where guys were killed on the road, most of the time because a guy fell asleep. Frank Hester died that way, and Buck Robley originally got hurt on the road, when he went to go to the bathroom by the side of his car and another car hit him. Buck was knocked into his car door, which acted as a shock absorber and was the only thing that kept him from getting thrown a couple of hundred feet in the air. When you have to drive, getting there isn't that bad. But going home ... If a guy has to travel more than 200 miles, I really think he should be flown. Taking a car full of guys was one thing, but not everybody was like that. I went on the road with other

"A commission should be some sort of watchdog. It doesn't have to be a pit bull, but it should be a chihuahua that has a little more bark than bite."

-- Bob Roop

people for about a year, but after a while, I didn't like it, and ended up driving with just Bobby Orton. When you're with a car full of guys, you hear everybody's wishes about stopping and eating, and you have people drinking and smoking in your car. I know a lot of guys travelled together to save their transportation money, but I was making enough so I didn't care. I know that's off the subject, but it's something the commission can't control.

AM: How do you feel about licensing fees or wrestlers?

BR: It's just a formality in a lot of cases. I think the fee in Tennessee when I was there was \$5, and I never recall seeing a commissioner at the matches. You didn't have to take a physical exam, either. New York is the only place I've ever been that was pretty stiff with the medical exam. You had to even get an EKG, but there was a group of doctors who would let things slide through on the basis that even if you are in bad shape, you're not going to really get hurt because nobody is trying to kill you anyway. A year and a half ago, when Harley Race worked a match in Asbury Park, N.J., the

commissioner came and give EKG readings. The commissioner came to me and said Harley shouldn't be working. He rambled off about 8-10 different injuries, like his knees, neck, back, etc. We agreed that Harley shouldn't even be alive, much less working. They let him go by. It was a tacit understanding of the situation. One problem with commissioners is they get too close to what they're supposed to be regulating and can't be objective.

AM: Are there some cases where you feel commissions have gone too far?

BR: Yeah. In Michigan, they took things too far. The reason is they had a death in a Golden Gloves boxing match with 15-16-year-old kids, and the public made such a big stink about it they put in very, very harsh rules. One rule was the physician had to be at ringside for the matches. One time in Saginaw, the doctor got an emergency phone. He made his call back, and is standing about 50 yards away with an open space in front of him so he can see the ring. The match was between Mr. Wrestling II against some guy, who's already in the ring. I'm doing the ring announcing, because the regular guy was sick. The commissioner comes up to me and says I have to stop the matches until the doctor returns to ringside. You know how serious Wrestling II was, so I told the commissioner to try and stop him.

All that can be taken to extremes. What (WWF owner) Vince McMahon did in New Jersey was done years ago in California, with the titling of wrestling as an "exhibition." That was the way to go to get out from under the thumb of the state athletic commissioner. Commissions always ask if wrestling is partially real or all fake and all choreographed. You can't answer that question. When you say everything is scripted, the conclusion of a match might be. But in a 20-minute match, you don't have every move down pat before going into the ring. When you have a 300-pound Steve Williams about to enter his second match at New Orleans Superdome, in a position where you can't get to him before the match because his locker room is on the other side of the building, and you have to go out and wrestle 20 minutes with him, not only is the match not scripted, but you have to have a match with him where he's not going to kill you. That is very definitely real. It takes a lot of talent, tact, poise and everything else to make a guy look good and make sure everything else comes out OK. If a promoter says wrestling is fake and choreographed, someone could come out with an angle saying McMahon and the promoters agreed to that because the commission was not giving them the leeway and freedom to go out of the ring or not stop matches because of blood. It had nothing to do with whether the matches are real or not. It had to do with the promoter using the exhibition tag to get out from under the commission.

AM: Has a commission ever done you any good?

BR: Yes, it has. It was very beneficial in this one case. I had a beef with (long-time California promoter) **Roy Shires**, who wanted me to do certain things that I wouldn't do. So I quit as booker. Roy had the tendency of paying the boys two weeks late, and was notorious for not paying people once they leave the territory. (Current WWF front-office employee) **Terry Garvin** was promote some towns for Shires. I figured out what my pay was going to be for each town I was scheduled to wrestle in, and Terry and I agreed I would get a draw (advance) for some money I had coming to me before I left. When Roy found out, he went nuts. One commission guy, who they later found to be on Roy's payroll and was kicked off the commission, had me suspended throughout California. A few weeks after leaving Shires, I got booked in Los Angeles wrestling **Andre the Giant** and in a battle royal. I arrived in L.A., and called the wrestling office. They told me they were sorry, but they got notice I was suspended. I not only missed a \$500 payoff, but they wouldn't pay my transportation cost (it was only like \$25, though, flying a shuttle plane from San Francisco to L.A.), but I'm suspended.

I went to the next commission meeting to try and appeal, and the same guy tried to block me. But I was lucky, because **Olga Connolly**, the former Czechoslovakian track star, was the commission chairperson. Because I hadn't gotten on the commission's agenda, they weren't going to let me say anything. When lunch break came at noon, I introduced myself to her and talked about the 1968 Olympics, which we both competed in. She let me speak, and present my case. They re-instated me. But remember, there were commissions in 27 states at the time (Editor's note: There are currently commissions in 24 states and the District of Columbia). If I was banned in California, I would probably be banned in all those states. So, yes, there should be a commission to prevent possible abuses. A commission should be some sort of watchdog. It doesn't have to be a pit bull, but it should be a chihuahua that has a little more bark than bite.

AM: What do you think about the state of Florida's attempt to regulate wrestling under the boxing commission.

BR: I think the wrestling commissioner should be a former wrestler, not even someone who knows a lot about wrestling. I think what goes on in the dressing room and what goes on 10 feet away from it are two different worlds. A wrestler knows what's going on, because he can talk to some of the guys and have much better chance of finding out what the conditions of the business are. Most current wrestlers won't talk to people they consider "marks." Wrestling used to be a very closed society. I never saw anyone who wasn't a wrestler in the locker rooms until 10 years ago.

AM: Finally, when you spoke in Tallahassee, you talked about possibly using some of the funds generated by a wrestling tax to go towards a retirement fund for older wrestlers. Why haven't the wrestlers unionized and attempted to enact such a system themselves?

BR: Wrestlers haven't unionized, because you cannot get them to stand together. You can't get the top guys at the time to join. The guys that want to get on top say, "Oh yeah, we should have a voice." If the guys on top making the big money get in the union, there is a good chance of them going through a process where they could lose their job and money. So the top guys say, "Well, no, I'm not interested. I'm doing pretty good where I am." The promoter says you can be replaced, being that championships are not based on fact, but who he thinks the fans want to see. What's the real difference between **Lex Luger** and **Sting**? Or whoever else is waiting in the wings. Given the proper buildup and **Jim Ross** raving for six months about how great a guy is, and you can make just about anyone a champion.

A lot also depends upon the mentality of the guys. For example, here's a story about **Killer Karl Kox**, who was a real man in the business and suffered tremendously for it. Karl set up a meeting between all the old guys in the country, like **Bruiser** and **Wilbur Snyder**, during the 1970s. All the veteran guys who have drawing power all over the country. All of these guys expressed a desire to have some control over their own destiny. Remember, this is in the days when 30 promoters had an alliance and could blackball you without the wrestler having a say whatsoever. There were no contracts or any of that. Karl called the meeting between 10 guys, and went to Indianapolis for it. Not one guy showed up. They were scared. When I tried to steal **Ron Fuller's** territory as a base of a union, guys wouldn't even talk to me. It wasn't that the guys didn't like me, but they were scared to. It was rumored we were rebels. If you got caught seen with us, you were a rebel, too.

AM: Could you explain the situation in greater detail?

BR: Sure. This was around 1978 or '79 in Knoxville. **Ronnie Garvin**, **Larry (The Great) Malenko** and I went to talk to the head of the **Sailor's International Union** to make us an affiliate. Any place there was any shipping in any city, we could shut down a show with their support. We began running shows in the territory. But this was still the time where the promoters banded together against any opposition. I remember **Eddie Graham** called me and said he spoke for the wrestlers. It wasn't a definite threat, but it was a veiled one. He said, "You know, you've got **Jim Barnett** promoting on one side of you (Georgia), **Jim Crockett** on the other (Mid-Atlantic), and **Nick Gulas** and **Jerry Jarrett** in Memphis. You're going to have a rough time." And it was true. They messed with us until we ran out of money.

Florida

Just some brief notes ... Eddy Mansfield's International Wrestling Federation is still in operation. They ran a show 12/12 before 145 people in Winter Park (outside of Orlando) and have shows scheduled 12/14 in Leesburg and 12/16 in Orlando. Mansfield still has a television taping scheduled for Dec. 27-28 at Universal Studios, but the chances of that happening are shaky. Mansfield remains without a spot on the Sunshine Network because of a financial dispute, but has his syndicated show on a bunch of small affiliates throughout the center of the state. Those shows are all repeats ... A meeting was held with wrestlers of James Manley's International Championship Wrestling Association earlier in the week, with Manley telling the wrestlers they have a television spot in Tampa lined up. The only problem is, none of the three stations in Tampa that carry wrestling say they are going to begin airing the group's telecasts. I understand a Lakeland television station was very unimpressed with the group's demo tape ... The Global Wrestling Federation's syndicated shows are now being aired on Saturdays on Channel 38 in Tampa. No word on the times ... Dave Meltzer reports Larry Sharpe has a Monster Factory wrestling school opening in Tampa on April 5. Hope to have an interview with Sharpe in upcoming weeks to learn more about his plans in what is quickly becoming a hotbed for independent promoters.

This is the second issue for the month of December. My interview with Billy Graham has been delayed until next issue, as I am talking with the Superstar on the evening of 12/15. I will be able to produce two newsletters while in Miami on Christmas vacation, so the next issue will be mailed prior to 12/20, and the final issue by 12/26 (the day I leave for New Orleans to cover the University of Florida in the Sugar Bowl). I will publish the next *Three Count* issue after that on 1/7, which will also be the issue in which the new format takes effect. Next issue will feature more on steroids (suprise, surprise), the Graham interview, an editorial on the new WCW "insiders" program sold at matches, and all the news I can fit. Hope your holidays are going well.

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2 issues remaining